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No sooner had this radical cleanup of the body politic been consummated than the means began. That means little to any but a Californian. To him it means everything. We were quite new to the climate and the conditions, so that the whole thing was a great surprise.

For four days it rained steadily. The morning of the fifth day broke beautifully clear. The sky looked burdened as a blue jewel; the sunlight glittered like shimmering metal; distant objects stood out plain cut; with-out atmosphere. For the first time we felt encouraged to dare that awful mud and so sloped over to town.

We found the place fairly drowned out. No one in his first year thought of building for the weather. Barnes, hotel, the Empire and the Bella Union had come through without slipping a coop, for they had been erected by men with experience in the Californian climate, but almost everybody else had been leaked upon a plenty. And the deep dust of the travel worn overland road had turned into a morass beyond belief or description.

Our first intuition of a definite personal change came from our old friend Danny Randall, who hailed us at once when he saw us picking our way gingerly along the edge of the street. In answer to his summons, we entered the Bella Union.

"I hope you boys weren't quite drowned out," he greeted us. "You don't look particularly careworn."

We exchanged the appropriate comments, then Danny came at once to business.

"Now I'm going to pay off you three boys," he told the express messengers, "and I want to know what you want. I can give you the dust, or I can give you an order on a San Francisco firm. What do you choose?"

"Business business," asked Danny.

"It's quit for the season," Danny Randall told him, "like everything else. In two weeks at most there won't be a score of men left in Italian Bar." He observed our astonished incredulity, smiled and continued: "You boys came from the east, where it rains and gets over it. But out here it doesn't get over it. Have you been down to look at the river? No! Well, you'd better take a look. There'll be no more bar mining done there for awhile. And what's a mining camp without mining? Go talk to the men."

"We'll tell you. The season is over, boys, and next spring, and you may just as well make up your minds to hike out now as later. What are you laughing at?" he asked Johnny.

"I was just thinking of our big vigilante organization," he chuckled.

"I suppose it's true that mighty few of the same lot will ever get back to Italian Bar," agreed Danny. "But it's a good thing for whatever community they may hit next year."

Johnny and Old elected to take their wages in dust. Cal decided on the order against the San Francisco firm. Then we wandered down to where we could overlook the bar itself.

The entire bed of the river was filled from rim to rim with a rolling brown flood. The bars, sand spits, gravel banks had all disappeared. Whole trees bobbed and sank and raised skeletons of arms or tangled roots as they were swept along by the current or caught back by the eddies, and underneath the rear of the waters we heard the dull rumbling and crunching of boulders rolling beneath the flood. A crowd of men was watching in idle curiosity. We learned that all the cranes and most of the tools had been lost and heard rumors of cabins or camps located too low having been swept away.

That evening we held a very serious discussion of our prospects and plans. Yank announced himself as fit to travel and ready to do so, provided he could have a horse. The express messengers were out of a job. I had lost all my tools and was heartily tired of gold washing, even had conditions permitted me to continue. Besides which we were all feeling quite rich and prosperous. We had not made enormous fortunes, as we had confidently anticipated when we left New York, but we were all possessed of good sums of money. Yank had the least, owing to the fact that he had been robbed of his Porcupine river product and had been compelled for nearly three months to live idle, but even he could count on a thousand dollars or so sent out from Hangman's Gulch. I had the most, for my digging had paid me better than had Johnny's express riding. But much of my share belonged of right to Talbot Ward.

Having once made up our minds to leave, we could not go too soon. A regulation missed us. In two days the high winds that immediately sprang up from the west had dried the surface moisture. We said goodbye to all our friends—Danny Randall, Dr. Rankin, Barnes and the few miners with whom we had become intimate. Danny was even then himself preparing to return to Sonoma as soon as the road should be open to wagons. Dr. Rankin intended to accompany him, ostensibly because he saw a fine professional opening at Sonoma, in reality

because in his shy, hidden fashion he loved Danny.

We made our way out of the hills without adventure worth noting. The road was muddy and a good deal washed—in fact, we had occasionally to do considerable maneuvering to find a way at all around the landslides from the hills above.

One afternoon we turned off on a trail known to Old and rode a few miles to where the Pine family had made its farm. We found the old man and his tall sons inhabiting a large two roomed cabin situated on a flat. They had already surrounded a field with a fence made of split pickets and were working away with the tireless energy of the born axmen at enclosing still more. Their horses had been turned into plowing, and from somewhere or other they had procured a cock and a dozen hens.

For a brief period Yank and I quite envied the lot of these pioneers, who had a settled stake in the country.

"I wish I could go in for this sort of thing," said Yank.

"Why don't you?" urged old man Pine. "There's a flat just above us."

"How did you get hold of this land?" I inquired curiously.

"Just took it."

"Doesn't it belong to anybody?"

"It's part of one of these big Greaser ranches," said Pine impatiently. "I made a good try to get to the bottom of it. One fellow says he owns it and will sell; then comes another that says he owns it and won't sell, and so on. They don't know who this country, except a few cattle come through once in awhile. I got tired of monkeying with them, and I came out here and squatted. If I owe anybody anything they got to show me who it is. I don't believe none of them knows themselves who it really belongs to."

"I'd hate to put a lot of work into a place and then have to move out," said I doubtfully.

"I'd like to see anybody move me out!" observed old man Pine grimly.

**CHAPTER XXVII.**  
San Francisco Again.

We left our backwoods friends reluctantly, and at the top of the hill we stopped our two horses to look back on the valley. It lay, with its brown, freshly upturned earth, its scattered broad oaks, its low wood crowned knolls, its thought sleep in the shimmering warm floods of golden sunshine. Through the still air we heard plainly the beat of an ax and the low, drowsy clucking of hens. A peaceful and grateful feeling of settled permanence, to which the restless temporary life of mining camps had long left us strangers, filled us with the vague stirrings of envy.

The feeling soon passed. We marched cheerfully away, our hopes busy with what we would do when we reached New York. Johnny and I had accumulated very fair sums of money in spite of our loss at the hands of the robbers, what with the takings at Hangman's Gulch, what was left from the robbery and Italian Bar. These sums did not constitute an enormous fortune, to be sure. There was nothing spectacular in our winnings, but they totaled about five times the amount we could have made at home, and they represented a very fair little stake with which to start life. We were young.

We found Sacramento under water. A sluggish, brown flood filled the town and spread far abroad over the flat countryside. Men were living in second stories of such buildings as possessed stories and on the roofs of others. They were paddling about in all sorts of improvised boats and rafts. I saw one man keeping a precarious equilibrium in a baker's trough, and another sprawled out face down on an Indian rubber bed, paddling over-side with his hands.

We viewed these things from the thwarts of a boat which we hired for \$10. Our horses we had left outside of town on the highlands. Everywhere we passed men and shouted to them a cheery greeting. Everybody seemed optimistic and inclined to believe that the flood would soon go down.

"Anyway, she's killed the rats," one man shouted in answer to our call.

We grinned an appreciation of what we thought merely a facetious reply. Rats had not yet penetrated to the mines, so we did not know anything about them. Next day in San Francisco we began to apprehend the man's remark.

Thus we rowed cheerfully about, having a good time at the other fellow's expense. Suddenly Johnny, who was steering, dropped his paddle with an exclamation. Yank and I turned to see what had struck him. Beyond the trees that marked where the bank of the river ought to be we saw two tall smokestacks belching forth a great volume of black smoke.

"A steamer!" cried Yank.

"Yes, and a good big one!" I added.

We lay to our oars and soon drew alongside. She proved to be a side wheeler of fully 700 tons, exactly like the craft we had often seen plying the Hudson.

Along toward midnight as I was

leading on the rail forward watching the effect of the moon on the water and the shower of sparks from the twin stacks against the sky I was suddenly startled by the cry of "man overboard" and a rush toward the stern. I followed as quickly as I was able. The paddle wheels had been instantly reversed, and a half dozen sailors were busily lowering a boat. A crowd of men, alarmed by the trembling of the vessel as her way was checked, poured out from the cabins. The fact that I was already on deck gave me an advantageous post, so that I found myself near the stern rail.

"He was leaning against the rail," one was explaining excitedly, "and it



The Small Boat Immediately Heeded In His Direction.

gave way, and in he went. He never came up."

Everybody was watching eagerly the moonlit expanse of the river.

"I guess he's a goner," said a man after a few moments. "He ain't in sight nowhere."

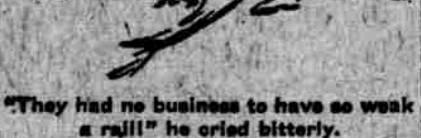
"There he is!" cried a half dozen voices all at once.

A head shot into sight a few hundred yards astern, blowing the silvered water aside. The small boat, which was now afloat, immediately headed in his direction, and a moment later he was hauled aboard amid frantic cheers.

The dripping victim of the accident clambered to the deck.

He was beside himself with excitement, spluttering with rage and uttering frantic threats against something or somebody. His eyes were wild, and he fairly frothed at the mouth. I seized him by the arm. He stared at me, then became coherent, though he still spluttered. Johnny was habitually so quietly reserved as far as emotions go that his present excitement was at first utterly incomprehensible.

It seemed that he had been leaning against the rail, watching the moonlight, when suddenly it had given way



"They had no business to have so weak a rail!" he cried bitterly.

beneath his weight, and he had fallen into the river.

"They had no business to have so weak a rail!" he cried bitterly.

"Well, you're here, all right," I said soothingly. "There's no great harm done."

"Op, isn't there?" he snarled.

Then we learned how the weight of the gold around his waist had carried him down like a plummet, and we sensed a little of the desperate horror with which he had torn and struggled to free himself from that dreadful burden.

"I thought I'd burst!" said he. And then he had torn off the belt and had shot to the surface.

"It's down there," he said more calmly, "every confounded yellow grain of it." He laughed a little. "Broke!" said he. "No New York in mine!"

The crowd murmured sympathetically.

"Gold darn it, boys, it's rotten hard luck!" cried a big miner, with some heat. "Who'll chip in?"

At the words Johnny recovered himself, and his customary ease of manner returned.

"Much obliged, boys," said he, "but I've still got my health. I don't need charity. Guess I've been doing the baby act. But I was clean mad at that rotten old rail. Anyway," he laughed, "there need nobody say in the future that there's no gold in the lower Sacramento. There is. I put it there myself."

We drew up to San Francisco early in the afternoon, and we were, to put it mildly, thoroughly astonished at the change in the place. To begin with, we now landed at a long wharf projecting from the foot of Sacramento street instead of by lighter. This wharf was crowded by a miscellaneous mob, collected apparently with no other purpose than to view our arrival. Among them we saw many specialized types that had been lacking to the old city of a few months ago—sharp, keen, businesslike clerks, whom one could not imagine at the rough work of the mines; loafers whom one could not imagine at any work at all; dissolute, hard faced characters without the bold freedom of the road agents; young green looking chaps who evidently had much to learn and who were exceedingly likely to pay their little fortunes, if not their lives, in the learning. On a highstand at one side a street preacher was declaiming.

Johnny had by now quite recovered his spirits. I think he was helped greatly by the discovery that he still possessed his celebrated diamond.

"Not broke yet!" said he triumphantly. "You see I was a wise boy after all! Wish I had two of them!"

(To Be Continued.)

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